

731

b) at least first and second interchangeable disposable loading units each having a different stroke length corresponding to the length of a staple row applied to body tissue thereby, and a second portion of an engagement coupling for releasably engaging the first portion of the engagement coupling of the surgical stapler at the distal end portion of the elongate stapler body.

21. A surgical stapling kit as recited in Claim 20, wherein each disposable loading unit includes a carrier which supports a staple cartridge containing a plurality of surgical fasteners and an anvil against which the fasteners are driven when ejected from the staple cartridge in response to operation of the actuation assembly.

22. A surgical stapling kit as recited in Claim 21, wherein the second portion of the engagement coupling is operatively associated with a proximal end portion of the carrier of each disposable loading unit.

23. A surgical stapling kit as recited in Claim 21, wherein each disposable loading unit includes an actuator mounted to translate through the staple cartridge to interact with a plurality of staple pushers which sequentially urge the surgical fasteners from the staple cartridge in a direction transverse to the direction in which the actuator translates.

24. A surgical stapling kit as recited in Claim 20, wherein the stroke length of each disposable loading unit is selected from the group consisting of a 30mm stroke length, a 45mm stroke length, and a 60mm stroke length.

25. A disposable loading unit for utilization with a surgical stapler, the stapler having a handle portion, an elongated body extending distally from the handle portion, and an actuation assembly operatively associated with the handle portion and the

731
elongated body, the disposable loading unit comprising:

a) a carrier having a proximal end portion including a coupling for releasable engagement in a distal end portion of the elongated body;

b) a staple cartridge supported in the carrier and containing a plurality of surgical fasteners and a plurality of fastener pushers for ejecting the fasteners from the staple cartridge;

c) an anvil supported on the carrier and mounted for movement with respect to the staple cartridge between an open position and a closed position, the anvil having a fastener forming surface against which the surgical fasteners are driven when ejected from the staple cartridge by the fastener pushers and a camming surface opposite the fastener forming surface;

d) an actuator mounted to translate through the staple cartridge to sequentially interact with the fastener pushers; and

e) a drive beam having a proximal engagement portion configured to mate with a distal end portion of the actuation assembly of the stapler and a distal working end portion including an abutment surface for engaging the actuator and a camming member for engaging the camming surface of the anvil, whereby operation of the actuation assembly moves the drive beam through the carrier causing the camming member to progressively close the anvil as the actuator translates through the staple cartridge to sequentially interact with the plurality of fastener pushers.

26. A stapling unit as recited in Claim 25, wherein the camming member comprises a cylindrical cam roller mounted on a flange extending from the distal working end portion of the drive beam.

27. A stapling unit as recited in Claim 26, wherein a longitudinal slot is defined in the anvil to accommodate the linear translation of the working end portion of the drive beam.

28. A stapling unit as recited in Claim 26, further comprising a transverse support flange operatively mounted on the working end portion of the drive beam opposite the cam roller and positioned to engage an undersurface portion of the carrier as the cam roller engages the camming surface of the anvil.

29. A stapling unit as recited in Claim 28, wherein a longitudinal slot is defined in the undersurface of the carrier to accommodate the linear translation of the working end portion of the drive beam.

30. A stapling unit as recited in Claim 25, wherein a knife blade is operatively supported adjacent a leading edge of the working end portion of the drive beam for forming an incision in stapled body tissue.

31. A stapling unit as recited in Claim 25, wherein the actuator comprises a sled including a planar base portion and a plurality of spaced apart upstanding cam wedges each having an inclined leading edge for interacting with the fastener pushers within the staple cartridge.

32. A method of applying at least one surgical fastener to body tissue comprising:
providing a surgical apparatus, the surgical apparatus having a handle portion including a movable actuation handle and an elongated body extending distally from the handle portion, the elongated body having proximal and distal end portions, the elongated body distal end portion being adapted to receive a disposable loading unit;

providing a first disposable loading unit having at least one surgical fastener of a